

Good Afternoon,

My name is Dave Maloney and I'm an Assistant Director with the Connecticut Association of Schools. As you know from the information in front of you, we represent over 1,100 schools at all levels across the state advocating for the very best interests for all of our member schools and their communities. CAS applauds the work undertaken by the legislature and looks forward to working with you and the many partners across the state on this vital concern.

I am also a father, former teacher, coach, and school administrator. In all of those roles I have had extensive experience over the past 38 years dealing with the today's topic. While serving as Assistant Principal at Branford High School my primary focus was to build a community of learners through a comprehensive series of action plans to create a school climate that ensured the physical, emotional, and intellectual safety of every member of our community of learners. With the dedication of the faculty and student body, along with our parent community, Branford High School was one of four schools across the nation be recognized by "Operation Respect" for our positive school climate. Our challenge back then, and continues to be to this very day, is to design a systematic framework – a positive school climate with positive behavioral interventions and supports.

Decades of research have provided excellent guidance for school leaders on all aspects of bullying and mean spirited behaviors. Our focus must be on the newly developed National School Climate Standards, social skills instruction, positive school cultures, engaging instructional practices, and continuous, positive, and active supervision of student behavior and learning. Every stakeholder must be actively involved in this initiative, adults as well as students, and community members. No uniform, no metal detector, no security guard, no camera, and no school environmental specialist can do what a systematic framework of trained educators, parents, and students can do to ensure the safety and well being of our children.

CAS supports some modifications to the current proposal before you. Should we use the best research and evidence-based practices for preventing hateful, hurtful, unkind and mean spirited behaviors that we encounter? YES. Should we focus on a systematic program on positive school climate; starting with professional development, school climate surveys, data collection, action planning, monitoring and adjustment? YES. Should we require each local and regional board of education to direct, implement, and report improvement plans with regard to school climate initiatives? YES

The Connecticut Association of Schools stands ready to assist the Legislature and Department of Education in developing and implementing this important work. Connecticut has an opportunity to enact legislation that will lead the nation in this endeavor. We urge you to consider these modifications and pass this act. We cannot wait for one more student to stay at home for fear of being harmed at school!